THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. I. October 4, 1935 Tishri 7, 5696 No. 11

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Published by

THE SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM

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THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST POSITION

WE approach our task from the point of view of Judaism as a religious civilization. We envisage Judaism as the proper concern of all Jews, religious and unreligious, conservative and radical. . . .

IN affirming that Judaism is a civilization we give emphasis to the fact that it includes . . . communal organization, language, law, art, mores, customs, as well as religion. Moreover, all of these elements are organically related to each other; to omit any of them is to distort Judaism. All of them are functions of the group life of Israel and cannot be maintained unless we maintain the unity and integrity of the Jewish people and the continuity of its spiritual efforts.

WE believe that the material and spiritual welfare of the Jews can be achieved only through Jewish communal organization. . . . We favor the establishment of Jewish communal life in America, democratically administered and organized in such a manner as to include all Jews who wish to identify themselves with the Jewish people, regardless of what their personal philosophy may be.

IN affirming that Judaism is a *religious* civilization, we recognize first, the historic fact that the God idea has dominated the entire pattern of Jewish life in the past, and that continuity with our past is impossible without giving to religion a position, if not of primacy, at least of *primus inter pares;* and secondly, the social fact that a mature and complete civilization is bound to find expression in the idea of God and in forms of religious worship in which the hopes and ideals of human life are rendered articulate. It is that very sense of need for religion that impels us to reinterpret the traditional beliefs in keeping with what for us must be a tenable world outlook, and to revise and develop the traditional usages in keeping with spiritual needs which we can genuinely experience.

WE consider the establishment of Palestine indispensable to the life of Judaism in the diaspora. We seek to enable Jewish civilization so to root itself in the soil of Palestine as to make of the land the cultural center for Israel's intellectual and spiritual rebirth. We oppose any attempt to render Palestine the object of imperialist aims or the victim of private profit-seeking. We endorse every effort toward the establishment of a cooperative commonwealth in Palestine based upon social justice and social cooperation. . . .

WE are opposed to Fascism in every form. We object to any philosophy of government which seeks to curtail the rights of individuals to the free purusit of personal salvation through participation in any religious or cultural activity, or through affiliation with any national or ethnic group. . . . Recognizing the horror and irrationality of war as a means of adjusting conflicting interests, we shall support every effort looking to the perfection of machinery for the peaceful adjudication of such conflicts and to the utilization of such machinery as exists, wherever possible. Under no circumstances shall we give countenance or support to an imperialistic war that is designed to advance the interests of exploiting and oppressing classes. . . .

SOCIAL righteousness is possible only upon the establishment of a cooperative society, the elimination of the profit system, and the public ownership of all natural resources and basic industries. Until these objectives are achieved our sympathies and our support go to labor in its struggle with its employers for a more equitable distribution of the income of industry, and in the assertion of its right to organize for the protection of its interests without interference from its employers.

—*From "The Reconstructionist," January* 11, 1935.

THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

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EDITORIALS

Resuming Our Tasks

WE greet the readers of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST and wish them a year of achievement, security and health. As we resume publication, we turn to them again to join with us in the vital task of reconstructing Jewish life in this country. By their ready response to our call, they have indicated that we are not alone in this difficult but greatly rewarding work. We were especially impressed by the enthusiasm and interest displayed by the large group that attended our Dinner-Symposium on May 17 last. We shall long remember the earnestness, the attentiveness of the men and women who came to discuss with us the future of our movement.

On that occasion the addresses and discussions were based upon a five point program of reconstruction. That program we wish to reiterate here as we prepare to devote another year attempting to realize it: (1) The Hebraization of Jewish life, making the language and literature of our people an integral part of our cultural life; (2) religious orientation, by means of which Judaism as a religious civilization can be made to function in the life of every Jew; (3) the reorganization of communal life, breaking down the divisive competition of individualistic institutions and building an organized community; (4) the reconstruction of the social and economic order; (5) esthetic creativity, through which the Jewish spirit may be stimulated and encouraged in a renascence of artistic expression, through which the meanings and yearnings of Jewish life may become articulate.

That is the program to which we rededicate ourselves and to which we hope that all our readers will soon unanimously subscribe. But a program is not enough; action is essential. *Lo ha-midrash ikar eloh ha-ma'aseh.* Action is more important than theories. What can be done to translate our program into actuality? We have already intimated what course of action we recommend at this point, namely, the formation of Reconstructionist Clubs. At the Dinner, an announcement was made that twenty prospective leaders had already declared themselves prepared to organize such Clubs. These Clubs will meet regularly, to discuss the magazine itself, and to devise means of recreating the communities in which they are located.

We urge our readers to proceed along those lines. We are prepared to help you. There are undoubtedly many readers who reside in your city or neighborhood who would join such a Club. If you send us your name and address and tell us that you are eager to organize a Club, we shall be glad to print your letter so that those who are interested may communicate with you. We shall also be happy to correspond with individuals who desire guidance or suggestions.

It is only through the cooperation of

its friends that THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST can accomplish its purpose. On the eve of the New Year we dedicate ourselves anew to that purpose. We sincerely urge you to do likewise.

The Nineteenth Zionist Congress

REPRESENTING about 1,200,000 Jews throughout the world, 500 delegates from 53 countries attended the nineteenth Zionist Congress in Lucerne, Switzerland, from August 20 to September 3. Despite the secession of the Revisionist elements, this Congress was the largest and most representative in the history of the Zionist movement, and, perhaps because of the absence of those disturbing elements, the Congress proved to be one of the most successful.

Success in a Congress should be judged by three things: (1) The extent to which personalities are subordinated to the real issues, (2) the specific measures passed, and (3) the inspirational effect upon world Jewry. By each of these criteria, the recent Congress may be judged eminently successful. The delegates attended strictly to business; demagogy played no part whatever. It is indeed remarkable how earnestly every attempt was made to preserve unity and to advance cooperation. When, for example, the Mizrahi delegation threatened to desist from participation in the Congress deliberations as a protest against the failure of the Laborites to observe traditional religious practices in Palestine, and when these delegates demanded that sanctions be applied against those who violated the Sabbath and dietary laws, the Labor delegation, which commanded the majority, nevertheless worked long and patiently to achieve some *modus vivendi.* The spirit that prompted the liberal representatives of Mizrahi to mitigate their harsh demands and the motives that impelled the tolerant Laborites to meet Mizrahi half-way are indicative of the unity of purpose which animated the Congress.

In the selection of Dr. Weizmann as the new President of the World Zionist Organization, the same determination to break down barriers was evident. Although it has always been known that Weizmann is pro-Labor, the enthusiastic choice of his leadership by the Labor group deserves commendation, for, as a majority, they might very well have insisted upon the election of one of their own. But they realized the divisive effect that such a partisan act would have had, and heartily supported him. Zionists who had previously opposed him rallied around him, moved by the principle of "loyalty to the cause and not to a person."

Outstanding among the specific achievements of the Congress was the adoption of a program for land redemption and colonization. Calling upon the Keren Hayesod to raise a million pounds during the next two years, the Congress laid plans for an intensive campaign to broaden the base of Jewish settlement. The dangers of over-urbanization were faced fearlessly and unequivocally, and steps were taken to organize a colonizing company to work hand in hand with the Foundation Fund, and to bring all pressure to bear to insure the success of the national funds. They were not afraid to warn Jewry that the entire structure of Jewish Palestine is jeopardized by the fact that Jews hold only 6.5 per cent of the land with a population of 27 per cent of the entire population of Palestine.

Nor was the concomitant evil of land speculation merely deplored. The resolution on that subject provides that the Congress instruct the Executive "to appoint a commission to exercise control over rural and urban colonization activity, to be carried out by organizations and individual persons in Palestine or in the diasopra. This Commission shall issue correct and authorized information about all forms of colonization activity in order to protect the Yishuv and the Jews in the diaspora from incurring loss by unsound business in this sphere." The Congress acted not only to frustrate the greed of speculators; those Jews who have been reaping profits

from the German transfer agreement will now have their affairs scrutinized by the Executive and whatever exchange of goods or capital between Palestine and the boycotted country does not come within the legitimate bounds of the *Havaarah* (transfer) will be carefully prevented.

These concrete achievements, and others of a similar character, cannot fail to have their due effect upon the Jews of the world. Palestine is the cynosure of all eyes and every step toward the successful establishment of a just and secure homeland for the Jewish people will bring a feeling of confidence to those who look to settle there and self-respect to those Jews who have a spiritual stake in the land. The splendid demonstrations of cooperation and tolerance should dispel forever the Jew-begotten myth that Jews can never work together with one another. If it requires the proof of such a Congress to refute that paralyzing fallacy, we have had that proof. We can now turn to our tasks in the diaspora with greater faith in the latent possibilities of our people for unity and cooperation.

The League of Nations and The International Crisis

THE eyes of the world are turned to Geneva. Can the League of Nations avert the imminent threat of a world war resulting from Italy's aggressive attitude toward Ethiopia? We have little confidence in our own government's ability to maintain neutrality in the event of war notwithstanding its manifest intention to do so. If Woodrow Wilson, after having been elected President on a slogan, "He kept us out of war," found it necessary to involve us in war with Germany, it is evident that he must have yielded to irresistible pressure from American interests that would have been jeopardized by a German victory. In the complicated economic mechanism of modern society, every nation has a practical stake in any major controversy between other nations and, where important national interests are at stake, real neutrality of sentiment and action becomes impossible.

That is why the world today is looking so eagerly to the League of Nations to avert the threat of another war which would draw one nation after another into its vortex. That the League is grappling earnestly with the problem is evident. But we cannot be sanguine of its success. For the present situation shows the inherent weakness in the structure of the League. It is a league of nations each of which claims absolute sovereignty within its own borders. This means that its constituent nations regard themselves each as the self-sufficient judge of what affects its vital interests. Each one may legislate on such items as immigration, tariffs, subsidies, monetary policy and all other matters in which its economic interests are involved without any regard for the effect of its legislation on the welfare of other peoples. Inevitably there arises within the League a conflict between the nations whose growing population or increasing industrialization demands, under our capitalistic system, an expanding economic empire and those nations whose conquests of the past have already won them such empires and who are therefore the defenders of the status quo. It is generally acknowledged that the guilt for the last war does not rest with Germany alone but is shared by all the nations who were interested in limiting her economic expansion. If the application of sanctions by the League should actually prevent Italy from going to war with Ethiopia, the problem of the economic needs of Italy would remain unsolved, for they cannot be solved by a league of *sovereign* nations. To renounce war "as an instrument of national policy" is not enough. It is not merely the *instrument* that is wrong but the *policy* which has fashioned the instrument and wields it.

The evil inheres in capitalistic imperialism, in the selfish exploitation of undeveloped areas and backward people by nations more advanced in technical knowledge and possessed of more capital. So

long as competitive capitalism holds sway, nations will be organized primarily for the advancement of the material interests of their own population or, at least, of their own governing classes. A league of such nations may further some of their common interests but can hardly compose their conflicting interests where these are vital. Only an international organization based on a totally different conception of nationhood could maintain the peace of the world, one that regards nations primarily as cultural rather than economic units. Such an organization would have to disregard national sovereignties and proceed to reorganize the economic life of the world on the assumption that every people has an equal right to the natural resources and trade opportunities necessary for its existence and development.

It is likely that many people will call this utopian. If they mean by "utopian" that it is impossible of realization, then we should have every reason to yield to the despair that now threatens us, and to try no more to better the world. But if "utopian" means that the goal is distant, that many obstacles lie in the path, and that many generations, perhaps, must live and die before that goal is reached, then calling our objective "utopian" adds nothing to what we already know, except the intimation that we are somehow relieved of the obligation to approach nearer the goal. That responsibility we cannot shirk.

The Meaning of Rosh Ha-Shanah For Our Day

By Mordecai M. Kaplan

INTRODUCTION

IF sacredness is a quality in things and occasions, which calls forth profound reverence and humility, then Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur are the most sacred days in the Jewish calendar, for, while the Sabbath is legally the most binding, these days are emotionally the most stirring. We should, therefore, imagine that their observance dates from hoary antiquity. We should expect to find not only frequent reference to them in the earliest records of our people, but also evidence that they were treated from the very beginning with great solemnity. But when we turn to the Bible to have our expectations verified, we are disappointed. In contrast with the three pilgrim festivals, Pesah, Shabuot and Sukkot, which are given an important place in Deuteronomy as well as in the other legislative parts of the Pentateuch, Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur receive no mention whatever in Deuteronomy, and even in the other books are referred to mainly in terms of the special rites to be accorded them in the sanctuary. Outside the precepts to abstain from work and, in the case of the Day of Atonement, to fast and afflict one's soul, there is nothing to indicate that these holy days played by any means as important a part in early Israel as did the pilgrim festivals. Moreover, when we turn to the other books of the Bible we come upon passages, as in the case of Ezekiel, that point to the fact that these holy days were not yet fully established. And from the historical books we gather that both Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur bore an altogether different character from the one we associate with them.

Jewish scholarship has thus far made little headway in determining the origin of their observance or the spirit in which they were celebrated before the Maccabean period. Historical study has yielded but few suggestions of general interest. One of them is that Rosh ha-Shanah, as the first of the seventh month of the year, derived its sanctity from the sacredness which the

number seven had for the ancients. Like the seventh day of the week, the seventh year in the cycle of years, and the completion of seven such cycles, the seventh month was also signalized as holy. Accordingly, its inaugural day was celebrated with more *eclat* than that of the other months. The other interesting suggestion is that made by the late Meir Friedmann with regard to Yom Kippur. According to him, that day served as a prelude to the Festival of Ingathering. At that time the Jew was accustomed to give himself over to wholehearted rejoicing in the yield of the fields and the orchards. The fear, however, of having committed sin cast a cloud on his rejoicing. He therefore observed Yom Kippur in order to purge himself of whatever sins he might have committed during the preceding year. This circumstance, together with the fact that the tenth day of the seventh month seems to have been observed originally as a New Year's Day, has made of Yom Kippur the climax of the penitential season which begins on the first of the seventh month, or our present Rosh ha-Shanah.

It is evident that if we want to have these days evoke from us that deep religious and emotional response which would make their observance significant in our lives, we must interpret them not in the light of their origin or early history but rather in the light of what they came to mean to our people during the 2,000 years that are reflected in traditional Judaism. By studying carefully the ideas and values which have come to be associated with the High Holy Days in our tradition, we shall find implied in them certain meanings that are vital for our day and age, and that may well become the theme of additional prayers and the source of new emphasis in the interpretation to be given to these Holy Days.

There can be no doubt that the significance which the High Holy Days attained in tradition was inspired by the earlier biblical teaching. Thus, by making the High Holy Days the occasion for repentance, the teachers of Israel naturally turned to the biblical writings for the meaning of repentance. That meaning is conveyed in the term t'shuvah, or "returning." To repent was to return to the God of Israel. Since to stray away from him was to ignore his godhood and his authority, the first step in repentance consisted in becoming aware of his godhood and authority. In order to get the Jew to take that step, both Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur were dedicated to the proclamation that God is King. In the *amidah* liturgy of the day, the phrase "the Holy King" is substituted for "the Holy God," and the keynote of the entire ritual is the prayer that the long awaited hope that the God of Israel might be acknowledged by all the nations might be realized. The inauguration of God's kingdom came to be associated in the Jewish consciousness with the establishment of justice and peace on earth. This implied the condemnation and abolition of all those evils that impeded their establishment. The hope for the Kingdom of God was thus afforded a basis in the very ancient belief in the advent of the "Day of the Lord," which was now understood as a Day of Judgment on which God would assert his sovereignty by passing sentence on men and nations. But as the advent of God's kingdom was delayed, our Sages sought to keep alive the expectation of its coming by stressing the idea of God's judgment that was to be its inevitable prelude. Instead of thinking of God merely as the king who would at some distant future assert his sovereignty over all mankind, Jews learned to picture God as exercising his kingship in the present wherever he judges men's deeds and decrees the fate that is to befall them in this world. This made the affirmation of God's kingdom relevant to their every-day life. Thus, Rosh ha-Shanah became a sort of minor Judgment Day, rehearsing, as it were, the Great Judgment Day that was to usher in the kingdom of God.

II.

To reconstruct the meaning of Rosh ha-Shanah for our day, we have to retrieve the emphasis upon the kingship or sovereignty of God as the central theme. It is apparent that to speak of God as king is to use the language of metaphor. We would be hard put to it, however, if we were to try to replace such familiar metaphors with other figures of speech or with more literal language. But that in no way minimizes the importance of being aware of the literal truths which those ancient metaphors should convey to us. This applies especially to the most conspicuous metaphorical epithet used in speaking of God, the epithet "King."

Throughout the variety of facts or teachings implied in the metaphor of the kingship or sovereignty of God, there is the basic implication that the status quo of human life constitutes an imperfect manifestation of godhood. Thus the earliest conception of God's kingship carried with it the thought that this kingship was not perfectly manifest so long as other gods were also worshiped in Israel. The later conception of it, which made it the assertion of the recognition of Israel's God as the God of all nations, implied that so long as other nations do not also worship the God of Israel, his kingship is not manifested in perfection. When the idea of God's rule was identified with the faith in the coming of the millenium and the life of the world to come, it implied that the existing order as experienced by the Jewish people did not adequately manifest the sovereignty of God. The very conception of the God of Israel as King was thus enriched through the inference one was expected to draw from it, that the only time when his godhood could be fully manifest would be one in which superstition would disappear, righteousness prevail and salvation be universal. Stated in modern terms, the teaching of the sovereignty of God means this if the belief in God is to be translated into conduct consistent with all that the term God represents, it must lead to the remaking of the conditions that govern human life so that the evils which afflict it shall be, if not altogether eliminated, at least reduced to a minimum.

With this recognition of what we mean by the sovereignty of God, it is evident that our assertion of faith in his sovereignty must express itself by removing the evils that obscure it. Our acceptance of the primacy of the religious point of view in meeting life's problems demands that we recognize the evidence of religion in all those social forces that consciously seek to make life as a whole better, or the world a better place to live in. We must rid our minds of the narrow view which limits religion to clergy, worship, ritual, synagogue and church, and come to realize that the essential goal of all religion, whether it knows itself by that name or not, is to make human life whole, to enhance it and make it meaningful. In this larger sense, religion is any cause that commands and elicits loyalty, idealism and faith. Behind every belief in God there is devotion to some being, visible or invisible, individual or collective, a devotion that is regardless of self, that finds expression in the complete surrender of both mind and body.

There is a common feeling, however, that since loyalty, idealism and faith are of the essence of religion, any cause that brings these credentials is *ipso facto* worthy of acceptance. This is equivalent to saying that any object that people worship is worthy of being considered God. Judaism has never accepted this assumption. It has always combatted idolatry. One of the characteristic prayers of Rosh ha-Shanah, which by reason of its importance was subsequently incorporated into our daily services, the *alenu l'shabeah*, after expressing Israel's allegiance to God as King, continues to pray for the establishment of God's Kingdom through the abolition of all idolatry. Let us not assume that this prayer is irrelevant to our day because image worship is nowhere the vogue among peoples with whom we live.

An idol is any false god, any inadequate conception of deity, any unsatisfactory religion. These false gods are also worshiped with loyalty, idealism and faith. What it is important for us to realize is this: that a thing may be false, harmful and dangerous not because it has no grain of truth and goodness in it but because it has not enough truth and goodness in it. When Nurse Cavell uttered those memorable words before her death that are inscribed on her monument: "Patriotism is not enough," she stated for all times and for all causes the criterion that distinguishes falsity from truth—*not enough.*

What other elements must a religion or a cause possess that would make it a true religion, a just cause, and that would make its god a true god? All ethical values are determined by their relationship to two polar concepts, — sociality and individuality. They are polar concepts because though they are mutually contrasting they are dependent one on the other, each being meaningless without reference to the other. Just as every electric current implies a positive and a negative pole, so every human ideal must have reference to society and the individual. A true religious ideal is one which, in reference to sociality, is not satisfied with insuring the maximum cooperation of a group of human individuals with each other but insists that such cooperation must also make for cooperation with other groups until sociality is pushed to its furthest limit, the whole human race. Sectional and partisan loyalties within the nation that would sacrifice national interests to the advantage of their own region or party are not only not enough, but in the end also anti-social. Similarly, national loyalties that conflict with international peace and progress must be considered as essentially unsocial and immoral, a worship of false gods.

At the other pole, a true religious ideal is one that, with reference to individuality, recognizes the inherent worth and sacredness of every human life and the obligation of society to afford to each individual the maximum opportunity attainable for the satisfaction of his wants and the assertion of his personality. He must never be made the mere tool either of other individuals or of the social group. Whatever sacrifices of personal liberty and self-determination may be demanded by society of the individual must be such that their total effect is to increase individual freedom rather than to diminish it. All forms of slavery, all manner of exploitation of the many in the interest of the few, even all restraints imposed on minorities except such as may be necessary to prevent their imposing their wills on the majority or on other minorities, are evidences of false ideals. This is the significance of the frequently reiterated assertion that all men are God's servants. To be a "servant of servants," that is, to use up one's energies under the dictation of others and for the gratification of their wants, is inconsistent with the service of God which demands the autonomous quest for the good, the true and the beautiful as they reveal themselves in our personal experience. In correcting all abuses of the social order which arise from ideals that are falsely oriented to either of these two poles, we are dethroning false gods and expressing our allegiance to the one true God.

III.

In the past, however, the conception of God's sovereignty carried with it a meaning which, unless qualified, might jeopardize the spiritual value of that conception. According to that belief the new and better world was to be entirely the creation of God. It seems to have left but little room for man's cooperation. Such passivity on the part of man with regard to the advent of the millenium, or the world to come, was engendered by the growing sense of deficit, helplessness and frustration in the face of overwhelming odds. In recent centuries, as man has learned to apply his intelligence to the manipulation of natural forces, he has become impatient of passive waiting. The commitment of

religion to passive waiting for the millenium or to qualification for the life hereafter is discrediting religion. That commitment has led many to condemn religion as an opiate.

The chief connotation of the "sovereignty of God" must henceforth be the duty which that sovereignty imposes upon man to transform the conditions of life so as to make the world livable physically, socially and spiritually. This connection is in keeping with that growth of the conception of God which has led to the emphasis upon divine immanence in human life. The tendency is now to view man's initiative and active striving in transforming the conditions under which he lives as the way in which God manifests himself or becomes sovereign in human life. This more recent conception of God's sovereignty is in a sense a return to the mood of earlier prophecy when the dominant stress was upon righteousness as a means of immediate salvation rather than upon the hope of salvation at some remote future.

Initiative and active striving presuppose a definite goal. The traditional notion of the world to come as unimaginably glorious will get us nowhere. After the bitter experiences which mankind has passed through, it is possible to state quite specifically what sort of a world would deserve to be called one in which God is sovereign. It would be a world in which the polarity of man's nature—individuality and sociality—could be fulfilled. In all our relationships and dealings with one another the criterion should be: to what extent do they further the conservation and enrichment of individual personality and the ever increasing measure of cooperation among individuals and groups? To solve the problem of rendering these two objectives which are apparently mutually exclusive, mutually dependent, must become the dominant aim of all education and the passionate purpose of all social reform.

IV.

In the meantime, however, the cruel and disillusioning realities of our everyday life make it ever harder to hold on to the high hopes embodied in the affirmation of God as King. We must somehow discover a way of compelling the very chaos of the present to prove that it is being agitated by the forces of creation. Our ancestors seemed to have been able to draw not only solace but encouragement from world catastrophe. By studying their notion of the place of catastrophe in the scheme of human life, we might be able to extract faith from the universal frustration.

Our ancestors entertained the peculiar notion that the world salvation would be ushered in by world cataclysms. We find the beginnings of that idea in the Book of Ezekiel, which contains in the description of the war of God and Magog a prophecy by an anonymous visionary who foresaw an era of invasions, wars, slaughter, spoliation, as marking the end of the old world and the beginning of the new. Also in the Book of Daniel the period preceding the millenium is pictured as one of ruthless tyranny and oppression. In a similar vein did the Rabbis conceive the prelude to the messianic era. They depicted it as being filled with wars and rumors of wars, darkness and earthquakes, famine and pestilence.

What can be the meaning of this paradoxical belief that the millenium must be presaged by a series of disasters? Historically it was by means of that belief that our ancestors somehow managed to survive eras in human history when calamity spread over the known world and wrought havoc everywhere. Mankind passed through such a period when the Persian empire was breaking up. The disintegration of the Hellenic world that Alexander the Great had planned brought in its train dire evils which seemed to presage the end of the world. Likewise when the Roman empire was disintegrating and the barbaric hordes were ravaging its frontiers, both

rulers and subjects frantically looked about for some means of staving off the oncoming of the day of wrath. There was no people that was exempt from the tragedies that ensued upon the disorder and the anarchy to which the social cataclysm gave rise. But the greatest sufferers, as in all such periods, were the Jews. What enabled the Jewish people to survive these tremendous upheavals was the ability to find meaning in the social upheaval. They beheld the hand of God in those world-wide calamities—the ultimate consequence of man's violation of God's law, of man's oppression of his fellowman.

Scarcely has there been a time when there was such need for the ability to derive encouragement from catastrophe itself as there is in our day. Mankind, having sown the wind of greed and arrogance, is now reaping the whirlwind of national hatred, suspicion and selfishness. The world is probably more full of weeping today than it ever was. Shall this cry that goes up from a distressed humanity be merely one of blind despair, like the cry of the wounded animal bleeding to death?

This is the time to evince the spirit of religion with which our ancestors met the periods of social chaos. Like them, we must learn to behold in the disordered state of mankind not the dominance of chance, not the irredeemable welter of blind forces which must terminate in death, but a clear demonstration of the potency and inevitability of those laws of God whereby alone human society can live. A great world crisis is the outcome of the perversion of the law of harmony and reciprocity which is as essential to human life as the law of gravitation is to the physical world.

The powerful ones of the earth have always sought to supplant that law and to displace it with a law of their own—the law of selfish ambition, the law which assumes that the only way men can succeed is at the expense of someone else who must fail, that the only goal worth while in life is to get ahead of the other fellow. This law has been elevated into the principle of enlightened egoism. Egoism can be no more enlightened than darkness can be luminous. In our own day we have heard it exalted under the name of rugged individualism. This rugged individualism has corrupted the purpose of education, recreation and religion by using them for its own ends. The desperation into which we have fallen, the growing bedlam in the economies of the world are the penalty we pay for the violation of the law of God.

Penalties such as these should bring us the comforting and solacing thought that human life has meaning, that it need not be petty and gross and superfluous. To find this solace, we must not merely find ways of readjusting our economic conditions, but as a very means to that end we must learn the law of God. We must acquire social-mindedness, a new understanding and technique for human relationships. To that end we have to utilize the very institutions and machinery which have hitherto been employed in the service of individualism, to broaden our sympathies and enlarge our sense of responsibility and our desire for cooperation.

If mankind will learn from its present trials to realize and live by God's law, then this crisis will no longer appear as the dusk of setting worlds, but as the dawn of worlds rising to the glory of a newer and better day.

BOOK REVIEWS

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"The Nature of the Capitalist Crisis," by John Strachey. Covici Friede. New York. 1935.

"Farewell to Revolution," by Everett Dean Martin. W. W. Norton and Co., New York. 1935.

AN honest liberal whose approach to social problems is not cluttered up by sentimental prejudices will find the reading of these two books at once interesting and disturbing. The former will convince him of the inevitable collapse of the present capitalist economy and the impossibility of establishing a substitute economic order within the framework of our current political system dominated as it is by capitalist interests and capitalist ideology. The latter will equally convince him of the danger to social values inherent in class warfare when it expresses itself in revolutionary action. The two books must not be considered as representing two sides of a debate for they deal with different though related problems. Strachey's thought moves in the field of economics, Martin's in the field of political science; Strachey's is a critique of capitalism, Martin's a critique of revolutionary dictatorships and the totalitarian state whether it be based on Fascist or Communist ideologies. Intellectual honesty must admit the validity of both critiques. Reading the two books together, therefore, poses the question which neither of them answers: Can even a necessary revolution in the economics of production be effected without destroying those social gains which political democracy has achieved and which are indispensable to the emancipation of men from irrational social taboos, enslaving superstitions and arbitrary authority imposed in the interest of personally ambitious rulers?

Strachey's method is to analyze the opposing remedies for depression which the inflationary and deflationary schools of capitalistic economics advance and then to show, in the light of the Marxian theory of value, how each of them displays an awareness of one horn of the dilemma of capitalism and a blindness as to the other. It is impossible, within the scope of this review, to present a summary of his close-knit and carefully documented argument. To the reviewer, however, its logic is irrefutable. It shows conclusively how, under our capitalistic system, the profits of industry tend more and more to be diverted from the production of consumers' goods to the production of the means of production under a constantly mounting social cost issuing in crisis and economic paralysis. Only in industrially undeveloped countries, where there are still quantities of unappropriated raw materials and an abundance of cheap labor, can capitalistic production be profitably employed in increasing the quantity of consumers' goods. This explains economic imperialism and the persistence, treaties to the contrary notwithstanding, of war as an "instrument of national policy."

But to change this system and substitute for it an economy based on production for use instead of for profit involves the expropriation of those who possess the natural resources and machinery of production. In view of the small number of people who at present benefit materially by the capitalist system a revolution which would deprive them of their powers and put them on a status of equality with the rest of the population can hardly be opposed on ethical grounds. But, if historic experience teaches us anything, it teaches that a class never voluntarily abandons its privileged position. Inevitably it will utilize the economic power at its disposal to keep control of the government of the

country. By employing the police and military power of the state on the one hand and, on the other, the propaganda power of the press and other agencies of publicity which it controls, the capitalist class will prevent opposition to the present economic order from finding effective expression unless, in a crisis, a resolute minority seizes power and wields it in the interest of the at present exploited and dispossessed classes. Can we look forward hopefully to such a solution?

Martin's book gives a negative answer to this question. He bases his conclusions on a study of the social psychology of revolutionary movements amply illustrated by examples from all periods of human history. Whenever there is wide-spread social unrest and government shows weakness in handling a new situation for which it is unprepared, some section of the population is bound to see in the social crisis an opportunity for the seizure of power. Be its avowed aims what they may, the desire for power and for revenge against its real or fancied oppressors, is the actual motive of the revolutionary faction and all its behavior is intelligible only in the light of this motivation. In the beginning revolutions are frequently led by disinterested idealists desirous of a better social order, but, once the restraints of the old order are removed, the hitherto inhibited anti-social impulses of the mob assert themselves. Mass-hysteria takes the helm of affairs. The ideologies elaborated by the original prophets of revolution are set aside, but popular slogans derived from these ideologies are used by the mob to disguise from themselves as well as from others the true motives that impel them and to rationalize the anti-social behavior in which they wish to indulge. Demagogues skillful in the use of slogans and propagandist appeal to popular passion emerge as idols of the revolutionary mob which confers on them dictatorial power. The masses enjoy illusions of grandeur by imaginatively identifying themselves with their chosen leaders in the exercise of the tremendous power they confer on them, hardly realizing that they themselves are paying for this illusory satisfaction by the surrender of their own rights and voluntary enslavement to the will of their new masters.

The title of Martin's book, "Farewell to Revolution," must not be misunderstood as a prophecy that revolutions are impossible or unlikely in the future. It is rather an expression of the ironic conviction that revolutions invariably tend to defeat themselves. Martin sees in the revolutions of our day a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole cycle of revolutions against arbitrary and irresponsible government. For, whereas earlier revolutions were fought in the name of democracy and the right of the people to a creative share in social control, the revolutions of the present day, whether they be of Communist or Fascist type, frankly glorify dictatorship and make no disguise of their use of propaganda to reduce the masses to passive obedience and the voluntary surrender of responsibility.

EUGENE KOHN

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New Light on Ancient History

By Joshua Bloch

OURS is an age which has shown unmistakable preference, if not a decided love for historical fiction. It is an age which manifests an eagerness to see the great figures of bygone days portrayed as they should have been in life, in the opinion of their interpreters. In conformity with this tendency, Dr. Robert Eisler* set himeslf the task of proving that among the Jews and among their non-Christian neighbors—the Greeks and the Romans—there once existed a vast collection of traditions as to the historicity of Jesus and of John the Baptist which a rigid censorship deliberately destroyed or falsified. Despite the vandalism of ecclesiastical censors, enough material is preserved in places from which one may reconstruct "the fundamental features of Jesus' personality and his mission, particularly as they appeared to his enemies." He thus reopens the question as to the genuineness of the so-called Slavonic version of Josephus, fragments of which were published in German translation by Alexander Berendts as far back as 1906. Dr. Eisler makes this the chief source upon which he attempts to analyze and to reconstruct some vital incidents in the lives of Jesus of Nazareth and of John the Baptist.

In the extant fragments of the so-called Slavonic version of the writing of Flavius Josephus are contained a number of passages which offer an entirely different picture of both Jesus of Nazareth and John the Baptist. The incidents in their lives and works as reported in these passages vary considerably from the reports found in the traditional text of Josephus' writings and differ entirely from those contained in the New Testament and in other early Christian literature. In the Slavonic narrative the story of Jesus' life is told in outline, his superhuman nature is clearly acknowledged, his marvelous deeds and wonderful teachings are mentioned, while such items as the betrayal, the crucifixion, the watch at the tomb and the resurrection are attested. But the presentation of the story differs entirely from the accounts as found in the received text of Josephus' writings. The divergencies between the two are inconsiderable indeed, and their interpretation certainly offers a very complex task.

With the help of the Slavonic Josephus, Dr. Eisler is able to present an extraordinary portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth and of John the Baptist. A disciple of the latter Jesus became a revolutionary patriot, a "King who never reigned" and who was executed in the year 21 A. D. A descendant of the Rechabites—an ascetic sect mentioned in the Old Testament, and a carpenter by trade, Jesus was the victim of alluring dreams of a theocratic kingdom. His public career he began in Galilee as a vagrant pacifist. When he left his native country Jesus was followed by a small group of disciples who were secretly armed. Like the Rechabites, they were bent on heading a movement into the desert away from civilization. Unfortunately the hands of Jesus were forced by the extremists. At Jerusalem they attacked the forces of the Romans and one group of sympathizers took possession of the tower of Siloam which Pilate had to batter down. When Pilate succeeded in crushing the insurgents, he had Jesus and two of his accomplices executed. This despite Jesus' pleadings for pacific measures on the part of the insurgents who had hailed him as their king. When Jesus spoke of one who was "least in the kingdom of heaven," Eisler thinks he was referring to his own

*The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist, according to Flavius Josephus' recently rediscovered "Capture of Jerusalem" and the other Jewish and Christian sources, by Robert Eisler, Ph.D., with forty plates, English edition by Alexander Haggerty Krappe, Ph.D., New York. Lincoln MacVeagh, the Dial Press, 1931, pp. XXVIII, 638.

small stature, and when he said that "in my Father's house are many mansions" he offered an assurance to itinerant agitators that they will not be badly off when they flee to the desert from material advantages in towns and villages. The Slavonic narrative tells of Jesus that "many of the people followed him, listening to his teachings, since they believed that he would emancipate the tribes of the Jews from the hands of the Romans. It was his usual custom to stay outside the city on Mount Olive and there he collected one hundred and fifty disciples and many of the lower classes. Those who had seen his power and how he accomplished anything he wished by means of a mere word, told him to enter the city and kill the Roman garrison together with Pilate."

John the Baptist is described as a "wild or savage man." He too was a seditious character. He was the agitator among the insurgents who had elected him high priest. Their radical patriotism John the Baptist whetted by field preaching. Herod had him arrested and in the year 36 he was beheaded. The Gospel stories of the baptism and temptation of Jesus are here applied to John the Baptist.

The testimonies to Jesus and to the early Christians contained in the writings of the Talmud have been assembled and discussed frequently. Their genuineness has not been quetioned. Finding that quite a number of those passages do not conform to his views or do not serve his purpose, Dr. Eisler declares them to have no bearing on his subject. He is of the opinion that they are concerned not with Jesus of Nazareth but rather with his namesakes belonging to different periods. He is willing to accept the genuineness of only one Talmudic passage (Aboda Zara 16^{b}-17^{a}) and from it he draws the conclusion that Jesus was regarded as a heretic teacher of Jewish law. From Tacitus he draws testimony in support of the historic claim that Jesus was executed by Pilate, the Roman governor, because he was convicted of being a criminal and of being an organizer of a band of conspirators hostile to the entire human race. The Romans considered Jesus a rebel king of the Jews—legally a robber chief, a leader of bandits dangerous to the safety of the Roman empire.

All this differs from the traditions preserved in the Gospels and in their contemporary writings. Employing methods which violate accepted standards of literary criticism, Dr. Eisler subjects both the traditions in the Gospels and in the Talmud to most extraordinary treatment in order to present an "interesting" portrayal of Jesus as revolutionary. He rewrites authentic sources, recasts historic texts and deletes vital passages. Why all this pulling to pieces of trustworthy accounts? In order to sustain Dr. Eisler's extravagant claims in favor of the authenticity of the account contained in the Slavonic fragments of Josephus. All recorded facts pertaining to the life of Jesus and to that of John the Baptist are examined anew with the desire to win for that "newly recovered" source recognition as a first-hand authority.

That Flavius Josephus, the great historian of his people, a contemporary of the period in which Christianity saw its rise, said something of Jesus and of his followers is not unlikely. It is assumed that the hand of Christian censorship is responsible for the absence from our current text of his writings of any reference to the Nazarene and to the movement he founded. It must be borne in mind that what is current as the writings of Josephus are based on Greek manuscripts of uncertain Christian origin. This, however, is no reason for attributing to that eminent historian the authorship of the questionable Slavonic text. If it represents Jewish authorship, why exactly assume that it is the work of Josephus? If it is a product of the first century and belongs to a Jew, one may also think of associating it with the name of Justus of Tiberias, a contemporary Jewish opponent of Josephus. He, too, wrote a history of the Jewish War which was still extant in the ninth century.

Interesting and fascinating as Dr. Eisler's work is, the unsoundness of the methods of literary and historical criticism employed in it demand that it be read with great caution. Beyond all question, it must be borne in mind that Josephus is a hard writer to follow, and in reading his works one feels at times as though he were at sea without date or compass. But he was no romancer, rather a conscientious and upright historian even though often biased. Romancing with his text is dangerous, and attributing to him the authorship of what has all earmarks of fiction and legend is decidedly unfair.

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